

## Growing space for California stem cell research

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On left and right, Berkeley Stem Cell Center co-directors David Schaffer and Randy Shekman, and center, Mary West, manager of the new lab. *(Photo by Jan Ambrosini)*

Berkeley is the most recent institution to open new stem cell space funded by CIRM. Their CIRM-funded stem cell facility, which had its opening Oct. 5, is also a core facility for QB3, a bay area biotech incubator. David Shaffer, co-director of the Berkeley Stem Cell Center, said of the facility:

“The new facility will serve as a central resource to greatly enhance stem cell research amongst Berkeley and QB3 investigators, as well as collaborators at Lawrence Berkeley National Lab and Children's Hospital Oakland Research Institute.” To date, University of California campuses at Irvine and Davis have both opened their new stem cell buildings amidst much fanfare. By the end of October, UCLA, University of Southern California, and Stanford will all have cut their respective ribbons.

These buildings are, to a one, beautiful, gleaming, well equipped centers for cutting edge research. But they are more than that. They are also a safe haven for stem cell research, protected from the ups and downs of federal funding. CIRM first dreamed up and approved funding for these stem cell buildings when President Bush was in office and most stem cell research had to occur in isolation from the microscopes, the pipettes, the refrigerators, the reagents, and the latex gloves most labs purchase with their NIH funds. The research had to take place in space and on lab benches supported only through private or state dollars.

That space was hard to come by, making the early days of stem cell research a considerable challenge. Take Susan Fisher at UCSF who lost her stem cell lines to a power outage while working in a converted dentist office in San Francisco in order to put distance between her cells and federal dollars. (Here's a video about Fisher's experience)

In the past year President Obama opened up federal funding for more stem cell research, but now recent events put that funding back in question. During this time of uncertainty, it's reassuring to know that so many institutions in California have space where their work toward new therapies can continue uninterrupted by political turmoil.

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**Tags:** University of California Irvine, university of southern california, University of California Davis, Stanford University, Major Facilities, University of California Berkeley

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